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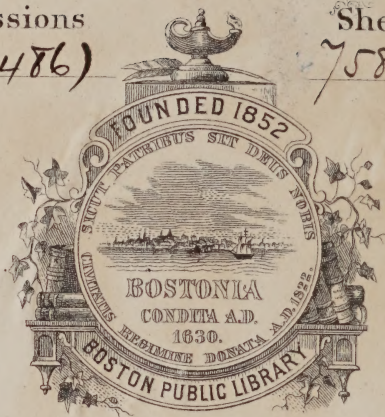
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The Claims of Seamen.

AN

ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT

THE ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE

NEW BEDFORD PORT SOCIETY,

December 10, 1848.

By REV. JOHN WEISS.

With the Society's Nineteenth Annual Report.

Published by Vote of the Board of Managers.

BOSTON :
BENJAMIN H. GREENE,
1849.



The Victims of Slavery.

AS

ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT

THE ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE

NEW BEDFORD SOCIETY.
From Dr. R.

HELD AT THE

BY REV. JOHN W. WHEAT

THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE

NEW BEDFORD SOCIETY

BOSTON

ANNALS OF THE SOCIETY

1848

ADDRESS.

THE Society in whose behalf I have the honor of addressing you this evening, represents a charity of a nature so noble, and of interests so grave and imminent, that any one might well shrink from this occasion, if he thought that those interests depended at all upon his passing words. It is fortunate, then, that this charity is so well established in the feelings and the esteem of this community. My task is thus greatly diminished, since it does not become necessary, this evening, to win conviction in favor of some newly broached scheme; but simply to remind you that a long-tried and honorable charity already exists, and proffers that surest of all claims upon your sympathy and practical support—past success. If that success has not been entirely commensurate with the hopes of the firmest and most interested members of this Society, it is not, I am confident, so much from want of feeling, as from lack of the thoughtfulness and unintermitting attention which is needed to see how the wants of this charity have accumulated and developed

beyond its income. At any rate, if it does languish—and that it does is beyond a doubt—it would not become me to assign any reasons for it. It is my business simply to freshen the subject in your minds, and to fasten upon it, if possible, such a degree of attention as will secure your substantial support.

This charity will not permit me to say a word by way of apology; it comes to you with the open and trusting face of a needy friend; too much your own personal friend, and too secure in its honorable intentions, to apologize for addressing you, nay, for pressing the matter home upon you, and importuning you for aid. This charity is emphatically your friend—the best friend you have in this city; for it labors in behalf of the sailors—the men whose toil has laid every stone of your prosperity—upon whose welfare your fortunes hang even now, securely as they may seem to be possessed by you; men, in whose moral health, in whose robustness of character and devotedness of purpose your interests are so inextricably blended, that to pretend to regard this charity with indifference, would be both suicidal and unfeeling. Certainly this cannot be the case; it is too plain a fact. The relationship between your ease and their hardship can be traced so unerringly, as to convict you constantly of a responsibility. In no other sphere is the mutual necessity of the directing head and the toiling hands more unavoidable; and, let me add, in no other sphere would the neglect of this affinity be more disastrous, whether we regard your commercial soundness or their personal salvation. For though personal salvation is always possi-

ble, and may be worked out by man in most cheerless and unpromising environments, yet no circumstances or conditions are so hostile to the growth of human virtue, as the neglect of the more favored. Neglect secures miserable fortunes, and miserable fortunes steep a man's temptations in double bitterness. Neglect precipitates the dreadful conflict between circumstances and the human will, and establishes recklessness as a master motive. It makes hungry virtue yield at the tempting sight of bread—it produces those disheartening conditions of life, that daily depression beneath unappreciated toil, unmerited aggressions, which sends the cheerless man to seek for gleams of sunshine in the color of his dram, and in an avenging excess for that solace which we enjoy in the gentle effervescence of domestic pleasures. The intimate relation between goodness and external condition has become, of late years, so successfully vindicated and established, that it is impossible to argue against the responsibility incurred by prosperity to generalize itself for the sake of virtue. It has been discovered, that to seek first the kingdom of God is to seek, among other things, to secure to our less fortunate brethren peaceful and hopeful circumstances. No class can be suffered to deteriorate through our neglect; least of all, that class in whose behalf I am proud to speak to-night.

The sailors have brought home and hived your honey; if they should refuse to work, or become, as a class, depreciated in the nerve and vigor needful for the chase and capture of your fortunes, the grass would begin to grow between the pavements, until,

through a precarious transition, you had directed your diminished capital to safer results. Let me allude to some circumstances which tend, in my opinion, to diminish the practical availability of seamen, and consequently to retard their moral improvement. In saying this, I am not ignorant that numerous seamen, notwithstanding the depressing and demoralizing nature of their social condition, secure manliness and purity, and confirm all the tendencies of their souls in favor of virtue. Still this cannot be affirmed of them as a class; and the success of some is by no means an argument against increasing the chances of the rest, by bettering their condition. Beginning, then, with the practical and material interests, not doubting that we shall emerge finally upon the spiritual, let me mention first, the absence of a Sailor's Home as a deficiency that implicates character and virtue to an incalculable extent.

The Society in whose name I speak, is a Society for the *moral*, not specially for the social or physical improvement of the seamen. I feel as if carrying out, preëminently, the great purpose of this Society, in calling your attention to the desirableness of a *Sailor's Home*. And let me ask you, in the first place, to put the question to yourself: What is one of your strongest auxiliaries against temptation? Do you say it is your love of virtue? Far be it from me to doubt the motive which secures the average goodness of this community; and yet it is possible to mistake for the love of virtue a variety of cumulative circumstances whose result imitates so well that of the highest motive, as to betray men into content, till they call that

virtue which is only fortune. No man will be unwilling to confess that, under other circumstances, perhaps his love of virtue might be inadequate to secure even a respectable demeanor. Do you say it is your strength of will? Nothing is stronger than the human will, when it is willing; but the children of prosperity are apt to call strength of will what is only weakness of temptations, and to imagine that they have been establishing a character, when they have only caught the tone of their fine environment. We cannot gauge the power of circumstances over us; we can hardly exaggerate our good fortune in being saved from the grosser vices, by never having felt the power of their enticements; and even though it be true, that great nobility results from an almost hopeless struggle, yet you dare not say that your love of virtue would bear you safely through—you cannot affirm that your will is willing enough to make you conqueror. No, my friends, your present goodness has a powerful ally. *Your homes* repair the deficiency in your love of virtue, and atone for the weakness of your wills. You cannot calculate your moral condition if you were rendered homeless to-morrow; nay, you cannot figure to yourself the image of your character nurtured in bleak places, beyond the genial atmosphere, the irresistible, conservative influence of home. Try to imagine yourself abandoned to the mercies of a nomadic life, amid the doubtful and interested hospitalities of men, whose love is measured by your ability to pay, and is not strong enough to prevent their solicitations of your passions. Imagine yourself with no solace more refined than that of

boon companionship, because no more refined companionship. Imagine yourself a member of that floating population in every city, who look from afar at your peace and comfort, who look in at the windows of your homes, and envy their tranquil and ruddy enjoyment, who look and yearn, with all the instincts of the human heart, for the hundred things which eke out your goodness, and diminish the fearful odds of vice against resolution. Imagine yourself longing to be seated within the charmed circle of that fire-light, where affection, refinement, decency, honor, expand like grain in the sun—where the very routine assists good purposes, and the four walls seem to repel the infections which you are forced to breathe daily. Imagine yourself involved in this practical repulse of society—homeless amid homes, each one of which isolates and secures much of what you long for, and were destined for,—doomed to the cheap and transient privacy of the best nook you can get for what remains of your wages—doomed to be the object of unprincipled speculation and base manœuvre—doomed to be shelterless at the caprice of your publican—doomed to be betrayed by your own generosity and confidingness, and to have your passions sedulously fostered by men who look upon your degradation as a jest—doomed to a life, the uncertainty of all whose features, at the best, is proverbial—imagine this, without exaggeration, a doomed social condition, and calculate to what extent your innate love of virtue will carry you unscathed—calculate your chances for a noble, Christian character. You need not imagine the result; you can study your possible condition in

the vices of the seamen, whose virtues, under the circumstances, excite my profound astonishment. Seamen, when gathered together in a seaport, are, to all intents and purposes, ostracised—voted out of the social condition. The bulk of them are as much exiles, as if they had not just left sunny country homes, whose humbleness shelters so much virtue. And they are doomed to this state of social exclusion and danger, not because nobody takes interest in them—not because there are no considerate ship owners and captains, who remember their own life before the mast, but because they have no organized, comfortable, attractive social centre, which shall prolong the peaceful influence of their parents' house, and whose merciful hospitalities, instead of undermining, shall strengthen their good intentions.

It has been said that this is an institution which the sailor would countenance reluctantly, because his habits are fixed, and all his inclinations support the present system of tavern life, with its merciless bar-room hospitalities, its extortions and petty injustice, its degraded mimicry of domestic enjoyments in the arms of license, its abandonment to the improvident caprices of the moment. Were this really true, no argument could be more fatal to the mode of life it seems to justify. Debasing indeed must be the effect of that system which renders men content with it, by soliciting their worst tendencies, and by covering over its gross fraudulence with cheap enjoyments that render men only the more accessible to fraud; a system that should not be suffered to exist in a Christian city, though all its seamen gave it the cool and

candid preference of their judgments; a system so intrinsically a disgrace to every citizen, that it should be counteracted for honor's sake, for mercy's sake, though instinct and passion refused to accept the benefit. The duty to abate things morally injurious, is as constantly imminent as if we were the only party implicated; it is a duty which we owe to our knowledge and position, more imperative from the fact that our habits have not been enlisted in favor of the vicious mode, and that abstinence has kept the moral sense unclouded. But I deny that the seamen are attached to this precarious life in our sea ports; its coarse and varied solicitations have not so entirely biassed their natures, and blunted their sense of health and purity, that they would esteem an attempt to elevate their social condition an act of hostility. Their hearts would leap at the idea that an enlightened charity wished to interfere in their fortunes; there is true manliness and a remembrance of their early purity all alive beneath these visages ploughed up by excess. Those eyes which have flared and sunk in the fierce joy of riot, till a shy coarseness has usurped their former honest clearness, are still able to transmit the grateful looks of a spirit worthy of better things, and really longing to attain them—longing to revolt from the despotism of their circumstances, and to be as free as you are. I deny that the sailor likes to be fleeced and outraged—I deny that he feels a pleasure at being victimized in methods that happen daily in this city, and which have often pained my ears. I deny that he loves to have his very virtues forced to pander to his ruin; to have his generous

impulses made the opportunity to strip him of his wages; to have the only form of social pleasure that is left to him made the cause of his degradation, and the instrument in the hands of the designing. I deny that the sailor is so constituted, that he would not eagerly embrace manliness, health and freedom, that he would not cease to pursue those wanton feet which lead him to his bitter retribution, and to refuse to return again to the haunts whose low blandishments he has again and again deplored. Show him something better—give him a healthier environment—throw open the doors of temperance, comfort and rational enjoyment to him, and see how quickly his sharp and dear experience will decide him in favor of goodness; give him better chances, and beware lest you judge him for his courses followed in a condition which your virtue would be as powerless to resist.

We often hear the sailors designated as a reckless and unscrupulous class of men. Let us apologize for the vices of no class, but still let us perceive their causes and remedy. In this instance they have been attributed to a source quite unlikely to produce them. It has been said that their adventurous and uncertain employment induces a spirit of recklessness. They are thought to be infected with the fickle character of the element they live on, so that, unstable as water, they prevail over nothing but the water which represents their nature. It is assumed that a life of hardship and perils, of monotony alternating with a fierce excitement, of successful captures and of unsuccessful chases, creates a capricious and restless temper, altogether hostile to the quiet crystallization of a manly,

temperate character. In my opinion, no assumption could well be more unauthorized. A life of honest venture, such as the life of whaling from this port, is the school in which a man's soul may be braced and freshened, till the passions themselves shall become subservient to a vigorous will. The perils and transitions of this life, so far from bewildering and unhinging a man's character, give it, above all things, equilibrium, give it coolness and precision. Resistance to the tempest, calls out the elements of struggle and lends a man the sense of superiority over his accidents. New scenes and dangers are so many new experiences, which give manifoldness as well as vigor to the character. What education to a man's nerves and will and judgment in the pursuit and capture of those invested fortunes, which yield only to the highest skill and courage! What health and temperance in the atmosphere: what an impressive rebuke, felt underneath the bronze of those wind-smitten cheeks as well as imagined beneath our thoughtful paleness—what a rebuke of all that is impure and passionate in the immensity of waters, every wavelet of which is crested with the presence of God—what a rebuke in the largeness of style assumed by every day and night! What serenity in the absence of all gross temptations, of all degrading neighborhoods, as if here God had proclaimed a constant Sabbath, and had removed all distractions from the great act of worship! All this health and peace passes into a man's heart unchallenged, unaccounted for, and it largely assists the total result of his character, not suspected, perhaps, by intellects untutored to analyze causes of growth.

It is in this life of manly adventure, where God sees to it that the environment is righteous, that the sailor *gets his virtues*. During its progress, all his vices are in abeyance.* We must return with him to port, if we wish to discover the school that teaches him to be degraded, and the indulgence that robs him of the vigor which always made him conqueror at sea. It is in the unredeemed purlieus of our cities that he learns to be reckless and unscrupulous, and that he vindicates his title to the character of instability and license. He drinks it with the fiery draughts of his liquor, which leaves his nerves and his will like ravelled cordage; he embraces it with his facile wanton of the hour, who shears off the hair of his manly strength; he learns it from the baseness of his would-be friends, who pique and flatter his virtues to strip him of his earnings; he learns it from the neglect of the classes above him, who, without a sigh, behold him living amid all these ruinous relations—who do nothing to counteract the ease with which the abstinence of a voyage is adroitly plied and tempted with the allurements of the port; who think it a light thing to leave a man's salvation at the mercy of the vilest circumstances, and who then deplore the vices thus contracted. It is a wonder that a single virtue, a single manly impulse is left to the sailor; the noble traits of his character only attest the prevailing adherence

* So far as a depraved and reckless life is still carried to sea in the fore-castle, it is necessary to qualify the statement in the text. It is still true, however, that those external circumstances constitute the best influence that the sailor feels, and make the healthiest compensation for his vices that he ever enjoys.

of his soul to goodness, and the power of human nature to recoil, with elastic vigor, from the most crushing strokes. Not during a voyage on God's ocean, whose very perils are ministers of culture—not during the pursuit of an uncertain venture, whose outlays of skill and courage atone for every disappointment—but in the midst of culture, within the sound of Christian bells piercing the fumes of the gin shop and the deep forgetfulness of the brothel—*here* it is, in some of our streets, in the track of our daily business, that the sailor learns to forget his God, and to accumulate the retributions of a shipwrecked character. Mournful, and not joyful, is the day that brings him, with bellying sails, up the harbor; for we are not prepared to give him a Christian welcome. We have robbed not a single temptation of its sting; we have set up no clean and happy places of refuge to break the force of this undertow. He steps upon the wharf, sound and manly, with his hundred perils in the sinews of his arm, with the Northern lights and the gleam of the ripples round the keel in his clear glances, with the rote of the sea in his rocky speech; and homeless taverns thrust the eager cup beneath his nostrils, rattle the spendthrift dice in his ears, hold him fast in soft, treacherous arms, and then drive him forth, when he can yield no more, an object of repulse and laughter. Far better for him if the descending flukes, with one kind blow, had forestalled all this disgrace, or if the harsh-muttering iceberg had ground his bones to powder. Then he would lie “full fathom five,” in his manly grave, amid freights and ventures, amid stranded gold and jewels, out-

dazzling the deep sea's riches with a character that no neglectful city's vileness had bedimmed.

The first prerequisite for the moral improvement of seamen, for their permanent improvement as a class, is a Seaman's Home. On their return from a voyage, and during their life in port, they ought to be received by a regularly organized institution, where a spirit of kindness is installed, whence every thing that ministers to vice is expelled, and where a reasonable comfort shall so far predominate, that no good motive can exist for seeking other abodes. This would be the ruin of a certain class who now feed upon the sailor's foibles and excesses; be it so—or rather, let them begin to seek an honest livelihood. But, it is said, to establish such an institution as this, will cost thousands. That is the last objection whose force we should desire to avoid. Granted, it will cost thousands; and after you have spent them for that purpose, you may well say, in the language of Scripture, we have done what was our duty to do. It will cost thousands; but where do these thousands come from? Put off to sea, and follow that assiduous whale ship. Her keel grazes the sand of every bay and inlet, searching for the haunts, every year growing more and more remote, where your thousands are tumbling, not yet metamorphosed into house and lands. Put off, and follow the sailor as he coins his sinews into dollars, and swells your income with every favoring breeze. Will you pass a night with him, and listen to the rising wind as it wails among the cordage, precursor of the storm which comes down, as if with a personal presence, and disputes your vessel's right of way? Hear

the shrill scream of joy as it tears your sails to pennons, and defies grown men to wrestle with it. See how they plant their valorous footsteps among the rigging, disputing the hurricane inch by inch, aloft or on deck, valorous, clear-eyed, quick-witted, baffling hurricanes. See how they tempt danger on the outmost yards, on the topmost spars—see them strain the cordage as taut and rigid as their muscles; they look unblenched into the heart of the gale, and grow cooler and firmer the more it brawls and blusters. Are you willing to share with them the terrors of this pitchy night, in order to comprehend how your thousands are brought home to you? They are trophies of human daring prouder than the stained spoils of a hundred fields. Nay, we need not put off to sea in order to comprehend the growth of these thousands. Sit, while the panorama silently unrolls before you the scenes of its truthful romance; let the eye feast on perils worthy to have been met by old Northern Vikings in their search for new continents. They are gathering in your thousands; hear the cord sing as it spins out of the boat—it is prophesying your city mansion, which is securely fixed at the other end; see how these men run in among the dangerous strokes of the excited animal, their frail cockleshell tossed in the bloody surf of his outrushing life, that you may sit here and hear about it; that you may enjoy ease, plenty, position, influence. These heroes of a three years' campaign return at last, and drop their anchor in the bay, as quietly, as devoid of pretence, as if they had taken in their freight just outside, instead of having fought for every drop of it,

and carried it away from jealous gales. They are received by the dubious hospitalities of a city built out of their sea-faring; they come home to fall into the hands of harpies, to be stripped in grog-shops. They find no consideration, no position awaiting them; they land, and are adrift. My friends, this is the history of your thousands. Instead of this ignominious close to a career so full of honorable peril, the hand of wealth ought to conduct them to an establishment for which a few of these thousands have been devoted; and the voice of this indebted community should address the instruments of its prosperity, saying: For an equitable compensation enjoy the blessings of a home: wind-beaten, rain-beaten, sea-beaten men, enjoy a comfort that has no afterclap of pain—enjoy with pride this token of your successful toil; and with senses unblunted by indulgence, walk from a Home to a Bethel, whose Christianity shall be inharmony with your condition and your hopes.

I have dwelt at considerable length upon this topic of a Sailor's Home, because, with my views of what is essential to the moral elevation of this class of men, it is the unavoidable prerequisite to any efforts that shall be well calculated, permanent and thorough. Yet I trust that other things will not be depreciated by contrast. The Bethel is a noble object for our charity, and its claims are all the more pressing from the fact that no Home is yet established. It is, in the meantime, the only conservative influence which comes in contact with the minds of sailors ashore. We cannot abolish the brothel by law, neither can we do it by preaching; and the tavern will continue

to feed the passions of men so long as the demand to be fed exists. To say nothing, then, of every other spiritual interest, of all the other human vices which need to be met and reasoned with, the Bethel is a great source of influence to seamen, with special reference to the grosser temptations above alluded to. If we cannot abolish the sources of crime, we can support their antagonistic institutions. The Bethel is a hallowed place to seamen; a voice, speaking with the solemn authority of truth, and reinforced by appeals to their experience, warns them that the way of the transgressor is hard. The Sabbath services fall upon hearts as honorable and as worthy—nor is it hazardous to add, hearts as tender as any in this city. The Sabbath prayers sink like dew into parched and wearied spirits, parched with excess, satiated with excitement; they conjure up old memories of pure and docile boyhood, when the yearning voice of a mother repeated to them the wisdom of Solomon, and made them promise to avoid the feet that lead down to death. The Sabbath hymns, with their simple but fervent style, lift aside the coarse veil, like airs from heaven; and the early landscape is revealed, with all its domestic relations and peaceful, redeeming circumstances. Thus the sailor feels, once a week, how possible virtue is to him. The ideal of goodness glimmers through the seams and chasms of his dissipation. Blessed be the Bethel, and blessed be the voice that addresses these neglected children with the words of courage, unfolding before their eyes, full of emotion, the virtuous future that is possible to them, the peace of God, when there shall be no more sea.

The Bethel urges its claims upon you. It would be easy for me to show, and you would make no difficulty in acknowledging, that an upright, temperate, religious sailor, a man of faith who looks aloft, a man of humility who consults the unerring magnet, is the kind of man most likely to conduct your ventures with prudence and success. Indeed, I believe it is within the scope of statistics to show the ratio in which your thousands would increase with the increase of an equable and lofty life among the sailors. But to urge this point would be unworthy of you and insulting to them. They are men, they are brothers; and they ask influence and position to generalize some of its advantages. Need the case be argued at length in behalf of the Bethel? It is at this moment languishing for want of your solicitous regards. Whatever may be your opinion with respect to the feasibility of a Sailor's Home, but one feeling can exist, that the Church of the seamen shall be liberally sustained—that it shall be enlarged, for many turn away from its crowded aisles. A devoted hand and voice ministers at its altar, and it will be one of the gladdest moments of your life when you uphold those hands. Let not the weekly ministry of Jesus to the sailors be straightened or precarious; let the walls expand, till every heart that desires it may feel the presence of the redeeming spirit that reigns within them.

Thus, my friends, I feel that my task has reached its close; for I advocate too plain a case for redundancy of speech. A *Sailor's Home* and a *sea-worthy Bethel*; such are the practical objects presented to your consideration. This city, of unexampled growth

and prosperity, the first whaling port of the world, for whose stability thousands of seamen toil and suffer—would perform a lofty act, and clothe itself in imperishable dignity, if it would present to these men some token of its appreciative interest, erecting at the same time a Christian monument to its humane investment of its riches. Let it be a Home; embody that word, dear to all of us, so necessary to all of us, that its blessings may find many waiting hearts. Build up that word in durable material, and it will secure for these men that personal salvation, against which the storms of fate, the gates of sin shall not prevail.

REPORT,

PRESENTED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING,

October 11, 1848.

The Managers of the New Bedford Port Society for the Improvement of Seamen, in presenting to the members and to the public their 19th Annual Report, have nothing to communicate or to recommend of a particularly interesting or striking character.

The movements and results of the year now past, have been in harmony with the fundamental designs of the Society, and with its past experience. The welfare of the sailor, for time and for eternity, was the object which led to the formation of our association. For nineteen years it has pursued the even tenor of its way, with most commendable and effective singleness of purpose and simplicity of action, bringing to the aid and elevation of the "children of the sea" the means of successful enterprise, the sympathies of an all-embracing humanity, and the deep yearnings of that religious solicitude which goes forth into all the waste places of the earth in search of those

who know not God, and which looks with peculiar and most affectionate earnestness to the fulfilment of the prophet's sublime annunciation, that "the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto God."

The history of our proceedings for the year now brought to a close, is, in all its leading traits, the history of the years which have preceded it. While we have, in taking a retrospect of our whole history, had reason to thank God and take courage in the evidence which has been afforded us, that our operations have been blessed of Him who giveth the increase,—while we have had the unspeakable satisfaction of knowing, that it has not been in vain that the efforts of the philanthropist and the Christian have, through the instrumentality of our humble association, been put forth in aid of that peculiarly interesting, but in many respects unfortunate class of our fellow creatures, who go down to the sea in ships,—while we can most assuredly and joyfully look around us and behold that the bread of sympathy and solicitude which we have caused to be cast upon the troubled and turbid waters of the seaman's social and religious condition has been found, and that it has proved a source of comfort and refreshing to thousands and tens of thousands, and to some, to many, may we not confidently hope, the "bread of life."—while such have been the glad tidings which greet us as we take a retrospect of our past existence and labors, we have, as the managers of the New Bedford Port Society for the past year, had nothing in our experience, arising out of the present condition of our seamen or the nature of the instrumentalities put forth under our guidance for their

improvement and happiness, that has led us for a single moment to doubt the expediency, nay, the necessity of sustaining, and, if possible, enlarging, the operations of our association. The causes which twenty years ago led to this combined, and as it has proved, well directed effort, to assist the sailor to rise from his degraded social and moral condition, are still in existence. There are circumstances connected with the position, habits and exposures of a sea-faring life, which have demanded peculiar and associated effort in behalf of those thus peculiarly and unfortunately situated. The appeals which came forth from the suffering and degrading isolation of the sailor's position were heard, and humanity and faith have bridged over the chasm which separated him from those refining, exalting and saving influences upon which the happiness and safety, both of society and individuals depends. He has been won back to the bosom of social sympathies and Christian hopes. The current of his life, which so long pursued its dark, troubled and separated course, has been gradually mingling with the calmer, brighter and less dangerous waters of our common civilization.

The experience of our humble association alone, has been conclusive as to the power of well directed christian effort, to meet and to overcome the peculiar and adverse circumstances of the sailor's allotment. The "*life on the ocean wave*" is not of necessity and *irremediably*, a life of elemental exposure, of physical deprivation, and of degrading subserviency. The "*two years before the mast*," need not be years wholly cut off from social enjoyment and Christian

communion. The ship's company, with a feeling of brotherhood in their hearts, with tastes for social and intellectual enjoyment and the means for their gratification, and with the sustaining, ennobling and purifying motives and hopes of the religion of the gospel, finds itself, amid the solitudes of ocean, in possession of the most important and indispensable instrumentalities for happiness and progress.

On the other hand, the "*sailor boy capering on shore*," is not, of necessity, and without remedy, a mere pleasure-seeking and excitement-loving animal. The shackles of his double slavery—the slavery of his own burning passions, and of the ever besetting and ruthless panderers to his lusts, are gradually loosening; and their place supplied by that self-government and self-respect which higher hopes and aspirations have engendered. As a class, our seamen no longer regard themselves—or are they any longer regarded by others—as beings doomed to a life of suffering, toil and deprivation upon the sea, that they may spend a brief season upon the land, the double victims of a brutal sensuality and a more brutal avarice. Amid the darkness and despair of the sailor's solitary and forsaken condition, there was a voice heard, "*am I not a man and a brother?*" The voice was heard and obeyed. He was found to be both a man and a brother, claiming our sympathy and succor by the ties of an alliance to the common Father of us all, and by the possession of all those manly attributes which claim and reward the genial training of social intercourse, and the saving and purifying instructions and opportunities of a Christian fellowship.

But the great gulf of separation has not yet been wholly closed. The life of the sailor, as yet, retains, and must long retain, its distinctive features. Its more powerful outlines are, and for many years have been, gradually undergoing a process of change and amelioration; but enough remains that is peculiar, painful and pressing, to demand a continuation, unchanged in character and unmitigated in vigor, of that course of action which experience has shown to be adapted to the wants and peculiarities of the seaman's condition.

He is still a suppliant, at the gate of his more highly favored brethren. The hardships and deprivations of his lot, the indifference and the despair with which he alternately regards the crushing weight of the adverse influences which fasten him down to servitude and sensuality, are still pleading in his behalf, with an importunity that cannot be resisted by any heart not wholly destitute of all sense of Christian sensibility and obligation. The work of reparation, long neglected, now happily and hopefully commenced, is far from being complete. We say, *work of reparation*. We feel that society owes to the class of men for whom we plead, reparation for deep and long-continued wrong. Amid that devotedness to gain which has covered the river, the sea and the ocean, with the instrumentalities of traffic and transportation, the desire of rapid and exclusive accumulation has blinded the eyes of the devotees of gain to the rights of that portion of the machinery of commercial enterprise, that consists of men, like themselves, born for happiness and immortality. The claims of the sailor's

manhood and the sailor's soul, were brought into conflict with the claims of an absorbing and never satisfied desire for wealth. In the struggle, avarice was the victor; and the "children of the sea," equally with those whose victims they were, the children of the universal Parent, were sacrificed, body and soul, upon the altar of wealth.

The supposed necessities of maritime traffic, having "cabined, cribbed and confined" the sailor to the restricted, enervating and degrading boundaries of a mere sensual existence, and that one of suffering and continued toil—why should we wonder that the plastic susceptibilities of our nature should yield to the pressure of these adverse influences, and that the character of the sailor should be found dwarfed and deformed by this ungenial culture?

Philanthropy and a Christian solicitude found the sailor the degraded and contented victim of the supposed necessities, direct and collateral of the commerce of the ocean. They dared to question the rectitude of this requisition upon this class of the human family. They claimed to be heard in behalf of those whom proscription had doomed to a condition inconsistent with the rights and the duties conferred and demanded by the Creator of all. They felt bound to look boldly and resolutely into this supposed necessity, and to bring the ways of men, in their dealings with the sailor, both upon the land and upon the sea, to the judgment seat of interest, reason, humanity and religion.

The verdict was one of condemnation and restitution. The sentence had the approval of every heart

not wholly callous to the claims of a common humanity, and the work of reparation commenced. That work is still in progress. It is far from complete, but so far has it advanced, and so full of encouragement and hope is the record of its experience, that we look upon its success as a question no longer of doubtful solution. The traffic of the ocean no longer claims the dreadful sacrifice once demanded and allowed. The gallant ship can be and often is, a "*home on the ocean wave*" for him who has too long wandered homeless both upon the sea and upon the land. A home where the body may find sustenance and shelter; where the heart may find food for its glowing and expanding sympathies; where the mind may find the means of culture and improving entertainment; and where the soul's capacities and demands for the bread that cometh down from heaven, and for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, may find a rich and never-failing supply.

And on the land we now find "*homes*" for the sailor. Places for residence and repose, for moral improvement and religious progress, worthy to be called by that heart-cheering and most comprehensive appellation. And why should not the sailor have a home? A home—that heaven-created institution, where the wayside flowers of life bloom sweetest—where the cares of life find their richest solace—where the temptations of life are met by the strong bulwark of affection—where the sorrows of life are by the divine alchemy of an immortal faith, transmuted into its richest joys, and where the wrong-doing of life, its manifold and grievous misdeeds, is the most readily,

and thoroughly, and permanently subjected to the work of those reformatory and purifying influences which God has ordained for the completion of His work in the human soul.

The sailor wants a home. He demands, as we all demand, a seat beneath the vine and the fig-tree which have been appointed for his sustenance and shelter. He demands, as we all demand, to drink of the waters of his own cistern, the waters which flow by his own humble home, the waters that shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

The sailor now has a home in every feeling, every Christian heart. Let all hearts, thus alive to the claims of his destitution and his wants, unite in the effort which is making to rescue him from the slavery and impotency of a caste, and give him a firm and healthful position amidst the genial and elevating influences of Christian homes and Christian temples.

Such are the general reflections which present themselves as we look on the field of labor we have occupied, and examine its claims to attention—the progress that has been made, and its present and prospective aspects and demands. We have seen that the condition of the sailor has made a claim upon our Christian activity and aid; that the results of the effort in his behalf have been salutary and encouraging; and that there still remains a work for us to do, similar in character, and demanding of us the same course of action as that in which we have hitherto been engaged. The physical, social and religious wants of our seamen, still plead with us. In their behalf, we again appeal to the community; and under

the influence of a deep conviction of duty and responsibility, we ask of those who have been blessed by heaven in basket and in store, to give of their abundance, in aid of this humane and Christian enterprise.

The suffering sailor, sick and destitute, far from his friends and home—if friends and home he have—must not be turned over to the unwilling charity of an almshouse official.

The wants of the sailor's mind, the demands which his rational nature makes for culture and recreation, must not be left to be met by the licentious literature of the tap-room and the brothel.

The claims of our sailor-brother for social sympathy and fellowship, the call of his generous heart for a corresponding generosity and nobleness in ours, must not find in the fatal grasp of a mercenary landlord, the tender mercies of an unprincipled trader, or the treacherous tones of the syren-voiced seekers for his hard and scanty earnings, the only evidences of human kindness and regard.

And, finally, so long as the sailor remains in his peculiarly exposed and reckless condition—so long as his thoughtlessness, indifference or inability cause him to stay far away from those means of moral and religious culture which God has made necessary for his welfare—he must not be left, tossed by the elemental tempest upon the sea, and by the more dangerous and fatal tempest of passion and appetite upon the land, to listen to no other teachings but those which superstition utters in moments of danger or distress, or which a palsied body and a ruined soul give forth

in the agony of a hopeless termination of a wasted life.

In his behalf, for his physical, his mental and his spiritual wants, because of the impotency of his character and condition, because of his thoughtlessness, his recklessness, his deprivations and his sufferings, we seek for him a home for his affections, a shelter for his wasted and stricken frame, a *Bethel*, where he may be trained to seek and to find the satisfying and enduring riches of the Christian Hope.

In this last remark, we have set forth an epitome of the sailor's wants, and the character of those operations which have been set on foot for his relief.

The remainder of our report may be properly devoted to a brief account of what this Society has accomplished, with such a view of the work to be done, and the agencies by which it is to be performed.

The agent of our Society, with a true insight into the object it has in view, gives much of his time to visiting the sick and ministering to their wants. In the relief and assistance which he so often finds himself called upon to administer to the suffering and destitute sailor, he makes no demand upon the treasury of this association. It has been mainly through the means supplied by the Ladies' Branch of the Port Society, that our agent has been enabled to bestow upon the stricken in body and destitute in means, the care and assistance demanded by their suffering condition. As the almoner of the bounty which the exertions of these benevolent females has provided, the Bethel preacher has given comfort and relief to many a body racked with pain and wasted by disease, while, as the

servant of Him who went about doing good, and by whom he has been commissioned to preach the gospel to the poor, he has imparted the hopes and consolations of religion to the suffering and disquieted spirit.

Upon the same source he has been enabled to rely for a supply of needful clothing for the destitute seaman. The winding up of the ladies' clothing store operations left on their hands a small supply of wearing apparel undisposed of, and from this source have the necessities of many a ragged and penniless seaman been relieved. In this manner are the ladies, who have so long been devoted to the promotion of the sailor's well-being, continuing their benevolent and effective aid. Many a poor sailor, stricken in body and sorrowful in spirit, has had reason to bless the kind hearts thus heedful of his sufferings and active for his relief, and with the multitude of the afflicted who have preceded them, proved how full of truth as well as beauty are the words of the poet,

"When pain and sickness wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou."

It gives us much pleasure to state, that in this work of benevolence the ladies of South Dartmouth have zealously coöperated.

Not alone, however, to this source does our agent look for the means to relieve the many cases of sickness and destitution which claim and receive his attention. Private charity is often, and not without success, appealed to in behalf of this class of our sea-faring brethren. And not unfrequently, and never unsuccessfully, has he applied to the managers of

our Railroads, when afar from his place of abode and destitute of the means to reach it, the sailor has been dependent upon charity for the happiness of again finding himself at home.

For these purposes about three hundred dollars have been collected from various sources, and expended by our agent. None of these receipts or disbursements appear in the account of the treasurer of the Port Society. By the unfailing bounty of the New Bedford Bible Society, the supply of Bibles and Testaments for our whale ships is continued.

During the year, 293 Bibles and 892 Testaments have been put on board our ships.

In addition to these, large numbers of pamphlets and newspapers are carefully put up and placed on board our ships. Not less than 10,000 different publications of this character have, during the past year, been placed within reach of the navigators of the vessels belonging to our port.

It would give the Board much pleasure, to be able to state that the long continued effort to bring about the establishment of a Marine Hospital in the city had been successful. But we can make no such cheering announcement. *Ten thousand* sailors man the ships of this collection district, *seven thousand* sail in vessels belonging to this city; of the large number almost constantly with us, many are sick or disabled, and some sick, disabled and destitute, and yet, on the spot whose population has been gathered and whose wealth has been created by the sailor's toil and privation, no refuge can be found for him when disease

makes him its victim and unsuccessful exertion leaves him penniless, but the dreaded alms-house.

In justice to the enlightened and devoted representative in Congress from this district, the Hon. Jos. Grinnell, we feel bound to say, that with a clear apprehension of the sailor's necessities and feelings, and a deep sympathy for the sufferings and deprivations of this interesting and valuable class of his constituents, he has labored with his characteristic zeal and ability to procure for the destitute and infirm of their number the much needed and most ardently sought advantages of a refuge exclusively their own. Ever heedful of the obligations this community is under to those, who through much of exposure and suffering and with but small pecuniary recompense, bring to us the treasures of the deep, he has ever been ready to assert their rights and advocate their interests.

Our colored seamen, robbed of their citizenship and exposed to punishment and bondage by the defiant despotism of the Slave power of the South, have heard his voice raised in their behalf, and we are not yet deprived of the hope, that his labors to procure for the sick and the helpless a place of healing and repose, will be crowned with success.

The services at the Bethel have been continued as heretofore. Two services have been held every Sunday, and the prayer meeting on Monday evening has been sustained. Never have our religious exercises been more fully attended, and never has the interest with which they have been listened to and united in been greater. Our congregations consist, for the most part, of those who are engaged in a sea-faring

life, and of such persons whose habits, feelings and associations lead them to seek at the Bethel that kind of interest and teaching most in harmony with their peculiar capacities for instruction.

We do not look upon it as a cause of regret, that, after comfortable and ample accommodations are found for all the seamen who are desirous of attending the meetings at the Bethel, the unoccupied seats are filled with such persons as find it inconvenient to attend public worship in any other place. We could desire to see a much larger congregation than our humble church can receive, brought from the various parts of our city, from among those who now seldom are found within the walls of the sanctuary.

We could desire to see our Bethel doubled in its capacity, for accommodating that class of our population, who for various motives are prevented from attending upon public worship elsewhere. We could rejoice to find such accommodations provided for those who will not or can not provide them for themselves, that not only the poor sailor, but all the poor of our city could have the gospel preached to them. The funds that should be expended in thus making provision for the religious wants of the destitute and unconcerned of the by-ways of our city, would be one of the most profitable investments ever made among us.

It will be evident to every one, from what we have stated as to our plans and our proceedings, that the principal work which our Society has to perform is to sustain the agency which we have established. The work is mainly in the hands of our chaplain and agent.

To him it is that the destitute sailor looks for as-

sistance and advice. He finds out the sick, soothes the pillow of suffering, and administers hope and consolation to the dying sailor. He clothes the naked, and seeks out the means to send many a destitute one to his home and his friends.

He places in the sailor's hands the Bible, that the voice of the written word may be added to that of the word that is always very nigh unto him, when the preacher's voice cannot be heard, and to him is it owing, that many a weary hour at sea is passed in profitable and improving recreation. The books, the pamphlets, the papers are all gathered by him and placed within the reach of the improvident sailor. He meets him on his return, takes him to a comfortable home, and when the day of rest arrives, he speaks to him upon those solemn subjects which claim his attention as an accountable and immortal being. He is with him on ship-board, at the prayer meeting, at the boarding-house, at the counting-room and the saving's bank, ever solicitous for his welfare, ever anxious to promote his present and everlasting well-being.

It is to enable us to sustain such an agency that we once more appeal to the community. Our treasury is empty, but shall the work cease? *It must not cease.* It is a great and good work, and we earnestly and confidently appeal to the thoughtful and benevolent of our city to place at our disposal the means for a generous support of a continued and enlarged effort for the Moral Improvement of Seamen.

On behalf of the Executive Board,

JAMES B. CONGDON, *Secretary.*



(Nov., 1891, 20,000)

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